

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMCONSUL ZAGREB

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN REACTION TO YUGOSLAV PRESS COMMENTARY
ON AUSTRIAN REPLY

REF: A. BELGRADE 6170 B. VIENNA 10100

SUMMARY: ON DEC. 10 KREISKY SAID AUSTRIA READY FOR
EARLY HIGH-LEVEL TALKS WITH YUGOSLAVS ON SLOVENE MINORITY
CONTROVERSY AND HE HIMSELF WOULD TAKE PART IF YUGOSLAVS
SO DESIRED. IN EARLIER MOVE, AUSTRIAN FOREIGN OFFICE
INFORMALLY REJECTED SUBSTANCE OF "ANTI-AUSTRIAN"
YUGOSLAV MEDIA CAMPAIGN. GOA SOURCES ARE UNEASY ABOUT
MOTIVE(S) FOR CAMPAIGN AND SUGGEST DOWNTURN IN AUSTRO-
YUGOSLAV RELATIONS IS BY-PRODUCT OF YUGOSLAV INTERNAL
POWER STRUGGLE. INDICATIONS ARE THAT GOA VERY MUCH
WANTS DIALOGUE WITH YUGOSLAVS BUT THAT IT WILL PROBABLY
REMAIN IMMOBILIZED ON "SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS" AND
BILINGUAL ROAD SIGN ISSUES UNTIL AFTER 1975 CARINTHIAN
AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. CHANCELLOR KREISKY, IN PRESS CONFERENCE DEC. 10,
STRESSED AUSTRIA'S WILLINGNESS TO MEET AT ANY TIME WITH
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YUGOSLAVS, EVEN AT FOREIGN MINISTER OR CHANCELLOR

LEVEL IF SO DESIRED, TO DISCUSS MINORITIES QUESTION. KREISKY, IN OBVIOUS BID TO DEESCALATE CONTROVERSY, DEPLORED RECENT DOWNTURN IN HERETOFORE GOOD RELATIONS AND SUGGESTED THAT YUGOSLAVIA SHOULD RECOGNIZE AUSTRIA'S HONEST DESIRE FOR FRIENDLY RELATIONS AND ITS CONTINUING POSITIVE ATTITUDE ON ARTICLE 7 OF STATE TREATY. KREISKY ADMITTED LAW ON BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS HAD BEEN HANDLED BADLY BUT OPINED THAT YUGOSLAVS SHOULD NOT AS A RESULT QUESTION AUSTRIA'S GOOD INTENTIONS ON ISSUE.

2. KREISKY'S PUBLIC CALL FOR TALKS WITH YUGOSLAVIA CAME IN WAKE OF EXPRESSIONS OF SURPRISE BY FOREIGN OFFICE OVER "ANTI-AUSTRIA" CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY IN YUGOSLAV PRESS (REFTEL A). IN ITEM CARRIED BY AUSTRIAN PRESS SERVICE DECEMBER 9, FOREIGN OFFICE CAREFULLY NOTED THAT YUGOSLAV MEDIA REACTION, WHILE UNOFFICIAL, WAS NEVERTHELESS OF SOME IMPORTANCE. ITEM FURTHER CITED AUSTRIAN "INCOMPREHENSION" OVER YUGOSLAV MEDIA CLAIM THAT MOST RECENT AUSTRIAN NOTE HAD "SLAMMED DOOR ON SOLUTION" WHEN IN FACT AUSTRIA HAS REPEATEDLY DECLARED ITS READINESS FOR NEGOTIATIONS. SAME FONOFF SOURCES ALSO REJECTED AS TOTALLY UNFOUNDED "BORBA" ALLEGATION OF DEC. 8 THAT "AUSTRIA WAS BEING USED AS TRAINING AREA FOR ANTI-YUGOSLAV TERRORIST GROUPS."

3. GOA SOURCES HAVE EXPRESSED TO US IN LAST DAYS THEIR BAFFLEMENT AND UNEASINESS OVER YUGOSLAV MOTIVE FOR CONTINUING ESCALATION OF MINORITIES CONTROVERSY. AUSTRIAN SOURCES TEND TO EXPLAIN LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN TERMS OF CONSPIRACY AND POWER STRUGGLE WITHIN YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT IN WHICH AUSTRIA HAS BECOME HANDY OBJECT FOR DEFAMATION AMONG CONTENDING ELEMENTS.

4. AUSTRIAN PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS IN THEIR SUPPORT OF SUBSTANCE AND TONE OF LATEST AUSTRIAN NOTE. IN BUDGET DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT LAST WEEK NATIONALIST ELEMENTS IN OPPOSITION FREEDOM PARTY WARNED SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT THAT ANY MOVE TO ACCEDE TO YUGOSLAV DEMANDS TO ERECT BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS IN CARINTHIA WOULD CAUSE "SECOND REVOLUTION," FAR EXCEEDING 1972 BLOW-UP WHICH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAW ROAD SIGNS TORN DOWN AND WHICH EVENTUALLY RESULTED IN HUMILIATING DISMISSAL OF SOCIALIST GOVERNOR OF CARINTHIA.

5. FOREGOING DEVELOPMENTS SUGGEST FURTHER NARROWING OF OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO GOA IN ATTEMPTING TO DEAL CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH MINORITIES CONTROVERSY. LATEST AUSTRIAN NOTE AND KREISKY CALL FOR EARLY HIGH-LEVEL TALKS HAVE TWO-FOLD

PURPOSE OF TRYING TO GET YUGOSLAVS ENGAGED IN DIALOGUE
AND, ALTERNATIVELY, OF PROVIDING HISTORICAL AND LEGAL
BRIEF ON DISPUTE SHOULD YUGOSLAVIA MOVE TO INTERNATIONALIZE
ISSUE. ABSENCE OF ANY NEW PROPOSALS EITHER IN AUSTRIAN
NOTE OR IN KREISKY'S PRESS CONFERENCE COMMENTS ON
KEY ISSUES OF "SPECIAL MINORITY CENSUS" AND BILINGUAL
ROAD SIGNS INDICATE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT LIKELY TO
REMAIN IMMOBILIZED ON THESE TWO POINTS UNTIL AFTER
CARINTHIAN PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1975.HUMES

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